

Message Text

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DEPT ALSO PASS ERDA FOR NICHOLAS FEDORUK, OFFICE OF
PLANNING, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: IMPACT OF MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

REF: STATE 225758

1. OPPOSITION TO NUCLEAR POWER IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
APPEARS TO BE RESTRICTED TO SMALL MINORITY OF ENVIRON-
MENTALISTS SUCH AS FRIENDS OF THE EARTH. THESE GROUPS
HAVE OCCASIONALLY HELD PROTEST MEETINGS AT NUCLEAR SITES
BUT ATTENDANCE HAS NOT EXCEEDED 500 PEOPLE. THERE AP-
PEARS TO BE LITTLE POLITICAL OPPOSI-
TION TO NUCLEAR POWER IN THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. THEREA
ARE STRONG INTERESTS IN BOTH LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE PAR-
TIES IN SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF NUCLEAR INDUSTRY AND
THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO VOCAL ANTINUCLEAR SENTIMENT IN
PARLIAMENT. THIS IS A VERY INTERESTING SITUATION WHEN
ONE CONSIDERS THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM IS ONE OF THE FEW
COUNTRIES IN WHICH A MAJOR NUCLEAR ACCIDENT HAS TAKEN
PLACE, NAMELY THE FIRE IN THE REACTOR AT WINDSCALE ABOUT
TEN YEARS AGO. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THERE WAS CON-
SIDERABLE AND WIDESPREAD CONTAMINATION OF THE FARM LANDS

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OF CUMBRIA BY RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES, THIS INCIDENT WAS

VERY SOON FORGOTTEN. PERHAPS THIS WAS HELPED BY THE FACT THAT THE LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CONTAMINATION WERE NOT SERIOUS. IN ANY EVENT, THE GENERAL VIEW IN BRITAIN SEEMS TO BE THAT NUCLEAR RISKS ARE NO MORE SERIOUS THAN THOSE OF OTHER INDUSTRIAL HAZARDS. INDEED, THE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY HAS A REMARKABLE SAFETY RECORD WHEN COMPARED WITH COAL MINING AND OTHER HEAVY INDUSTRIES.

2. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THERE IS ANY DANGER OF A GENERAL NUCLEAR MORATORIUM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. THERE IS SIMPLY NO SUPPORT FOR SUCH A DRASTIC STEP AMONGST THE GENERAL POPULACE. THERE IS ONE POSSIBILITY IN WHICH SUCH SUPPORT FOR A MORATORIUM MIGHT EVOLVE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. NAMELY, IF A MORATORIUM WERE DECLARED IN A MAJOR COUNTRY SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES. BRITAIN PAYS VERY CLOSE ATTENTION TO EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IT COULD BE EXPECTED THAT A GENERAL MORATORIUM IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD CAUSE DEEP DISTURBANCES IN A WIDE GROUP OF INFLUENTIAL BRITISH PERSONS.

3. IN A RECENT ONE DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENERGY ORGANIZED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY ANTHONY WEDGWOOD BENN, THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION OF THE HAZARDS OF THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR. CONCERN OVER THE HANDLING OF PLUTONIUM WAS EXPRESSED BY SIR BRIAN FLOWERS, DIRECTOR OF THE IMPERIAL COLLEGE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION. SIR BRIAN'S VIEWS WERE GIVEN WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN THE NATIONAL PRESS. IN FACT, THIS WAS ONE OF THE VERY FEW NEWS ITEMS TO COME OUT OF THE CONFERENCE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER CONCERN ABOUT PLUTONIUM AND NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL WILL EMERGE AS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO FURTHER NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. AT THE PRESENT TIME THIS SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH THE NATIONAL ENERGY CONFERENCE MENTIONED ABOVE, THE CHIEF SCIENTIST OF THE UK DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, DR. WALTER B. MARSHALL, ISSUED A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ENTITLED "ENERGY R AND D IN THE UNITED KINGDOM," DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PLANNING OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY TECHNOLOGY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. THIS DOCUMENT CONSIDERS FIVE ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS FOR THE ENERGY FUTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. THE MOST PESSIMISTIC SCENARIO IS ONE WHICH ASSUMES A MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR POWER, A SCENARIO WHICH PLACES GRAVE STRESSES ON THE UK ECONOMY DUE TO ENERGY DEPRIVATION. IT SEEMS VERY UNLIKELY THAT THIS IS A POLITICALLY VIABLE SCENARIO, BUT IT IS MENTIONED HERE

TO INDICATE THAT UK ENERGY PLANNERS WISH TO INCLUDE IT
AS A POSSIBLE BUT NOT PROBABLE FUTURE. COPIES OF THIS
DOCUMENT ARE BEING OBTAINED AND WILL BE POUCHED TO
ADDRESSEE SOONEST.
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